

# Federal Health Insurance Reform

## Frequently Asked Questions: Small Business Tax Credits

### **When does the federal small business tax credit begin?**

The new federal health reform law provides a Small Business Tax Credit to businesses for contributing toward their workers' health premiums beginning with the 2010 Tax Year. The credit applies to all amounts paid or incurred in taxable years beginning after December 31, 2009.

### **Who qualifies?**

Businesses with fewer than 25 full-time equivalent employees (FTE) and average annual wages less than \$50,000 per employee qualify. According to the IRS, "Because the eligibility formula is based in part on the number of FTEs, not the number of employees, many businesses will qualify even if they employ more than 25 individual workers." [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)

To receive the tax credit, an employer must have a group health plan and must pay at least 50% of the premium.

### **How much is the tax credit?**

The tax credit is a percentage of what the employer pays and is based on the average premium in the small group market in the state. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is required to determine the average premium for each state or region. This fact sheet will be updated when such information is available from HHS.

For tax years 2010 through 2013, the maximum credit in each year is 35% of the employer's contributions (25% for nonprofit employers).

Beginning in tax year 2014, the maximum credit is 50% of the employer's contribution (35% for nonprofit employers). A business may receive up to 50% tax credits for two years. The two years of 50% credit is in addition to any credit the employer might have received for tax years 2010 through 2013.

### **Who is eligible for the maximum tax credit?**

The amount of the tax credit depends on the size and wages of the small business. The full 35% tax credit (50% in future years) is available for a business with 10 or fewer full time equivalent workers and average annual wages of \$25,000 or less. The tax credit phases out completely at 25 workers (FTEs) or average wages of \$50,000.

### **Who is not eligible?**

The tax credit is not available for coverage for working owners and their immediate families. Coverage for seasonal workers who work 120 or fewer days is not eligible for this tax credit.

### **How do businesses claim the credit?**

The Small Business Health Insurance Tax Credit is part of the "general business credit," which reduces the income taxes a business owes. If the credit is more than taxes owed, the unused credit can be carried forward or back to other years that a business has a tax liability. Tax-exempt small businesses may apply the credit to their payroll taxes.

### **Does Montana have a state small business tax credit?**

Yes. Insure Montana is a program for small businesses with 2-9 employees that currently provide group health insurance to their employees.

Insure Montana provides a refundable state income tax credit to employers who currently pay some or all of the cost of group health insurance for their employees. The program also provides additional tax credits when employers pay for insurance for the employee's spouse or their dependants. About 40% of the available funding per year is designated to the employer tax credit. To learn more, visit [www.csi.mt.gov](http://www.csi.mt.gov) or call 800-332-6148.

Find out more:

**[csi.mt.gov](http://csi.mt.gov)**

**1.800.332.6148**

